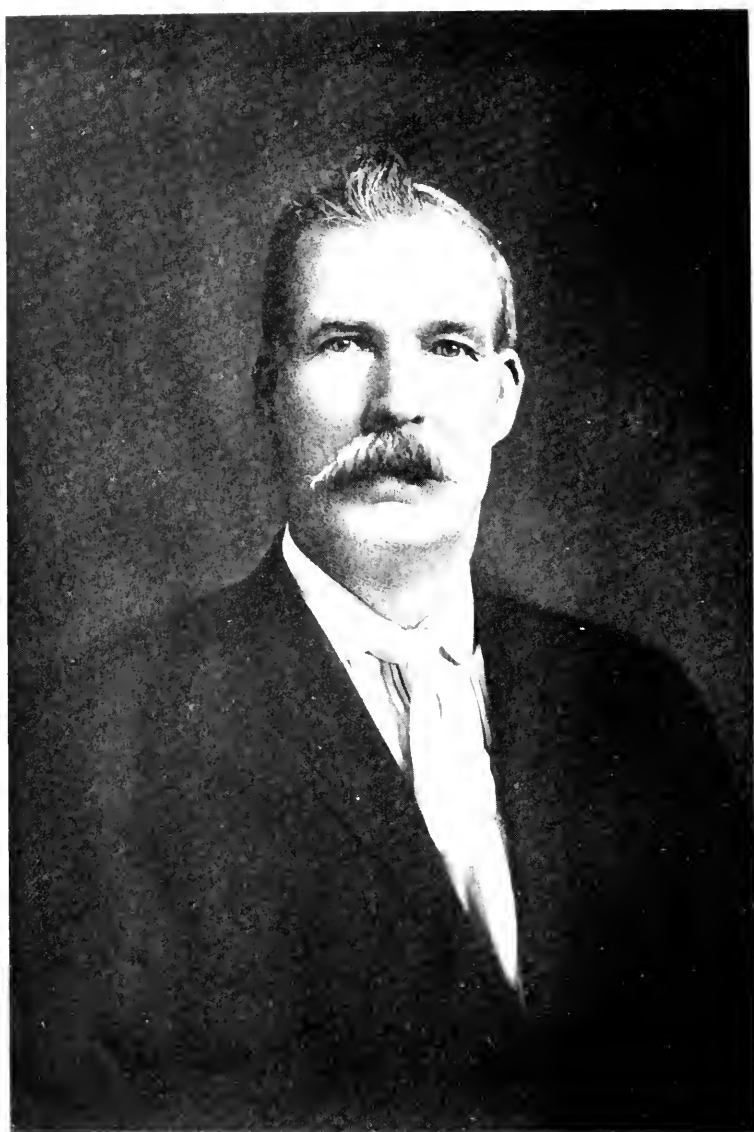


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Joseph C. Thompson



Joseph C. Thompson

A Tribute

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Joseph C. Thompson

Joseph C. Thompson was Director of Mines and Minerals of the State of Illinois from November, 1918, until his death on Monday, April 12, 1920. He was born August 4, 1857, at Sherburn Hill, County Durham, England. Before he was seven years of age both of his parents died and he was left to fight life's battle alone. At the age of ten he entered the mines as a trapper boy. An eager ambition led him to improve his spare moments in study. He paid particular attention to mining and, in time, graduated as a Mining Engineer from Rutherford College at Newcastle-on-Tyne. Later he made special investigations of mine gases at the University of Edinburg, Scotland. His superior skill secured for him positions of importance in the English mining fields. He made several visits to America and, in July, 1906, brought his family from England and settled in Southern Illinois, where he lived until his removal to Springfield in January, 1919. He held a number of positions as a mining engineer until he became a State inspector of mines, in which capacity he was employed when he succeeded his friend, the late Evan John, as Director of Mines and Minerals. On more than one occasion he faced death in mine disasters as he sought to save others, even at the risk of losing his own life. His whole career was marked by steadfast devotion to the industry of mining to which he attached himself in boyhood as his life work. In 1877 he married Miss Mary Jane Dixon, who bore him twelve children, eleven of whom, six sons and five daughters, grew to maturity. He was baptized in the Church of England, but, on his removal to America, affil-

iated with the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was a member of the Knights of Pythias and of the Masonic order, with whose beautiful and impressive burial service he was laid to rest in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield. His life stands forth as a remarkable illustration of human possibilities, when one follows the long trail taken by the orphan lad of England until, in a country strange to his kindred, he became the administrative head of a State department. Funeral services were held in the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Springfield on April 15, 1920, the pastor, Rev. Thomas Newell Ewing, being in charge.

From the Governor

The State has indeed suffered a serious loss in the death of Director Joseph C. Thompson. Thoroughly trained in his profession, of great practical experience, he was peculiarly equipped to discharge the duties of his important office. His zeal and devotion and courage made his administration of the office of Director of Mines and Minerals singularly successful. The State owes Director Thompson much. His associates will miss him greatly.

FRANK O. LOWDEN.

From the Directors

In his relatively brief term of service as Director of Mines and Minerals, Mr. Thompson gained the hearty esteem and the warm friendship of his associates in the administration of Governor Lowden. His genial personality was marked by a pleasing manner of address, his face lighting up with a gracious cordiality as he greeted his co-workers or, in conference with them, gave expression to his well-matured ideas. His trained mind enabled him to set forth his views with notable clearness and with conciseness of language. His opinions always carried weight, based, as they were, upon careful consideration and logical analysis of the subject under discussion. A friendly soul made itself manifest in a fine spirit which won and held the confidence of his fellows. Faithful in the performance of all his tasks, he was an excellent administrator. Interested in mining during his entire lifetime, he gave to it the best he had in him. His work was his joy. His increased responsibilities, as he grew older, only quickened his sincere desire to serve well his day and generation. The praise of those who knew him best follows him along memory's pathway.

FRANCIS W. SHEPARDSON,

Committee.

From the Minister

We turn instinctively to look back over the years to the boyhood of an orphan boy, left in England without father or mother before he had reached seven years of age, and when we think of the attainments of the lifetime that followed we wonder how it came to be. Faced, as he was, to go to work at the age of ten to help to make a living for himself and others, it was only by the most studious application at odd times that he was able to so enlarge his fund of knowledge and develop the latent resources of his mind as to fit himself for the responsible positions which he successively held. And while we wonder at the attainments of this life we are quite sure many forces conspired together to make them possible. Parentage, even though parental care was largely missing on account of untimely death, must have played a determining part; there is no doubt also that the wise counsel of elder friends and relatives helped; and yet beyond all of these it is according to our doctrine of the wisdom and kindness of the providence of God to believe that this divine guidance had more to do with it than anything else. So I have chosen to speak of the words of the Psalmist (Psalm 73:23-24). "Thou hast holden my right hand. Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel. And afterward receive me to glory." J. C. Thompson was a firm believer in the wisdom and providence of God. His favorite hymn, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," suggests at once the secret of his religious life and his life-time success. He believed in looking to God for the wise ordering of his life so that it would bring the best results to himself and his fellowman. He lived to make

working conditions of his fellow miners safer and more sanitary. He was devoted to a great mission of practical helpfulness. He was a successful administrator of practical affairs because he was an earnest student and a devout Christian. And there is nothing we can think or say that is of greater comfort to those who mourn his loss the most deeply than this word that he who knew the wisdom of divine guidance in this life is assured of divine guidance all the way through the dark valley of the shadow into which, sooner or later, we shall all be called. God, who guided him with his counsel, has promised also to receive him into glory.

THOMAS N. EWING.

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